Decision on the Substantive Change Report by European Council for Theological Education e.V. (ECTE)

Register Committee
Substantive Change
Report Decision
Ref. RC/C104

Ver. 1.0
Date 2023-11-20
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Decision of:	2023-11-20
Result:	Take note + further report
Report received on:	2023-08-30
Agency registered since:	2022-12-01
Last external review report:	2021-08-06 (full review) and 2022-12-27 (focused review)
Registration until:	2026-08-30
Absented themselves from decision-making:	none
Attachments:	1. Substantive Change Report, 2023-08-30
	2. Minuted clarification of 2023-11-06
	3. Guidelines for Micro-Credential Providers
	4. ECTE Policy on external quality assurance for microcredentials

1. The Register Committee considered the Substantive Change Report of 2023-08-30.

2. The Register Committee noted that ECTE developed a new external QA activity related to the *accreditation of micro-credential providers*. The Committee noted that the accreditation is intended for micro-credential providers (MCP) in the field of theology.

ESG 2.1: Consideration of internal quality assurance

3. The Register Committee noted the mapping of the MCP to the ESG standards 1.1 – 1.10 in the guidelines for micro-credential providers. While the Committee welcomed the coverage of ESG Part 1, the Committee underlined the remaining concern in how ECTE's reports address the effectiveness of ESG Part 1 in some of its standards (see Register Committee Decision of 2023-06-30). These concerns should be analysed in-depth in the next external review of ECTE, in particular the guideline 4.3 noting that the simplified self-evaluation report needs to "a) Provide evidence that ESG 1 standards are being applied to micro-credentials".

ESG 2.2: Designing methodologies fit for purpose

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4. The Committee further took note that the guidelines were developed by the ECTE staff and the ECTE board following the consultation of potentially interested providers. The Committee received an updated version of the guidelines with new references related to the annual monitoring, follow-up processes and decision making. The Committee noted that the new additions came following its request for further clarifications. Given the expediency of the changes in this guideline, the Committee underlined that any updates to the agency's guideline or procedures is expected to follow a proper stakeholder consultation process and it is done in a way to ensure its fitness for purpose. The Committee nevertheless understood that, further information is expected to be collected from stakeholders after piloting the MCP accreditation.

ESG 2.3 Implementing Processes / ESG 2.5: Criteria for outcomes

5. The Committee noted that ECTE has published the guideline and the specific criteria related to the accreditation of micro-credential providers. The Committee learned (see clarification of 2023-11-08) that site visits are normally only conducted for providers that do not have a valid accreditation by ECTE. For providers holding a valid external review that demonstrates compliance to the ESG Part 1, a simplified procedure is in place, where a desk-based review will be performed by peer experts without a site visit. The Committee found the procedure acceptable as long as the internal QA system of that provider has already been evaluated and the relevant elements re. micro-credentials have been covered (see point 3 above).

ESG 2.4: Peer-review experts

6. The Committee understood that the expert team selection process follows ECTE's usual practice and that experts receive specific training concerning the accreditation of micro-credential providers including a dedicated micro-credential review secretary (staff). The Committee further noted that the panel size should be suitable for the type and scope of the external procedure. Considering the reduced sized panel (of two experts) proposed by ECTE, the Committee underlined that this may be acceptable for ex-ante programme level procedures, or short follow-up procedures, but not suitable for large institutional evaluations. The Committee underlined that this issue should be specifically addressed in the next review of ECTE.

ESG 2.6: Reporting

7. While the accreditation procedure has not yet been formally launched, ECTE has prepared a dedicated website page, where it plans to include information related to the i.e., list the providers that have successfully been accredited by the ECTE, basic information on the provider, MCP Accreditation Review Report, MCP formal decision and validity, link to DEQAR and link to the micro-credential catalogue page of the provider.

    ### ESG 2.7:

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8. The Committee further noted that the provisions for micro-credentials concerning complaints and appeals will follow ECTE's institutional and programme accreditation activities.

9. While the Committee welcomed the detailed information provided in the Substantive Change Report, the Register Committee asks ECTE to provide a follow-up report after the implementation of the *accreditation of micro-credential providers (*once the piloting phase has been concluded*)*. In particular, the Register Committee asks ECTE to provide information on the training of experts, size of review panel and the implementation of the annual monitoring of MCP and thematic analysis.

10. The Committee further expects that this activity will be analysed in full as part of ECTE next renewal of registration.

EQAR Substantive Change Report

Reference #	25454745
Status	Complete
Login Username	office@ecte.eu
Login Email	office@ecte.eu
Agency #1	European Council for Theological Education
Agency acronym	ECTE
Expiry date #1	30/08/2026
Contact #1	Marvin Oxenham
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Other organisations?	No
A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed?	No
B. Has the organisational structure changed?	No
C. Changes in EQA activities	1. One or several new external QA activities were introduced
Description new/changed	The ECTE is introducing a new EQA activity related to the accreditation of micro-credential providers. The change takes place in response to developments in the EHEA around micro-credentials and to the positive response from ECTE stakeholders concerning micro-credentialing possibilities. This activity is an extension of ECTE's institutional and programme accreditation activities that were subject to the last external

	EQAR review.
1. New EQA activity:	
1	Institutional accreditation of micro-credential providers
Focus	• other i.e. micro-credentials, short cycle studies etc. • Institutional accreditation of micro-credential providers
ESG 2.1	The ECTE addresses the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes of ESG Part 1 in its activity of MPC accreditation by monitoring compliance to published MCP standards. The MCP standards are mapped onto ESG standards 1.1 - 1.10 (see Section 3, pp- 7-10 in Guidelines for Micro-credential Providers). Applicants for micro-credential provider (MCP) accreditation undergo an external review procedure to verify compliance to these standards.
ESG 2.2	Provisions for micro-credentials in designing methodologies that are fit for purpose are generally the same as for ECTE institutional and programme accreditation activities (these methodologies were subject to EQAR review). In particular, the methodology for MCP accreditation envisions an institutional review (rather than individual programme evaluations). This methodology is implemented through procedures described in the Guidelines for Micro-credential Providers (Section 2.2). The developing literature around micro-credentials in the EHEA area (e.g. Microbol recommendations, ENQA working groups, etc.)

has indicated that institutional reviews of micro-credential providers is the methodology that is most fitting given the small volume of learning involved.

ECTE stakeholders were involved at several stages in developing the methodologies for micro-credential provider accreditation. The draft of the envisioned methodology was discussed during several meetings by the ECTE staff and the ECTE board. A pilot consultation was held in February 2022 with a selection of potentially interested providers. The draft methodologies were then presented for consultation at the ECTE General Assembly in 2023. Individual meetings and correspondence with stakeholders have taken place during 2023 to whom the draft Guidelines have been circulated for feedback.

ESG 2.3	
1	https://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Guidelines-for-Micro-credential-Providers.pdf
ESG 2.3	Provisions for micro-credentials in implementing processes are generally the same as for ECTE institutional and programme accreditation activities (these were subject to EQAR review).

The process envisions the production of a self assessment report by the applicant, a desk-based review performed by peer experts (which may include interviews with internal and external perspectives), the production of a published report, a decision by the ECTE Accreditation Commission, consistent follow up and an appeals process.

These are described in section 2 of the Guidelines for Micro-credential Providers.

ESG 2.4	Provisions for micro-credentials in peer-review experts are generally the same as for ECTE institutional and programme accreditation activities (these were subject to EQAR review). The review teams will receive specific training concerning the accreditation of micro-credential providers and be supported by a dedicated Micro-credential Review Secretary (staff).
ESG 2.5	Provisions for micro-credentials in criteria for outcomes are generally the same as for ECTE institutional and programme accreditation activities (these were subject to EQAR review). The ECTE has published specific criteria for decisions related to the accreditation of micro-credential providers in the Guidelines for Micro-credential Providers (Section 2.1).
ESG 2.6	
1	https://ecte.eu/mcp-directory/
ESG 2.7	Provisions for micro-credentials concerning complaints and appeals are generally the same as for ECTE institutional and programme accreditation activities (these were subject to EQAR review).
ESG 3.4/ESG 3.6	Provisions for micro-credentials in thematic analysis are substantially the same as for ECTE institutional and programme accreditation activities (these were subject to EQAR review). Micro-credentials will be the object of TAs as the activity develops and data is generated. Provisions micro-credentials concerning internal quality assurance are generally the same as for ECTE institutional and programme accreditation activities (these were subject to EQAR review).

A supplemental IQA document (External Quality Assurance for Micro-credentials) specifically applies ECTE's general IQA policies to MCP accreditation (this is uploaded below and published here https://ecte.eu/introducing/internalqa/external-quality-assurance-for-micro-credentials/).

D. Activity outside the scope of the ESG	No
File #1	Guidelines_for_Micro-credential_Providers.pdf (497 KB)
File #2	External_quality_assurance_for_microcredentials.pdf (132 KB)
Submit form?	I am ready to submit the change report form
Last Update	2023-08-30 15:46:21
Start Time	2023-08-30 14:54:21
Finish Time	2023-08-30 15:46:21
IP	37.77.141.42
Browser	Chrome
Device	Desktop
Referrer	https://fs22.formsite.com/EQAR_forms/substantive-change/form_login.html

Substantive Change Report by European Council for Theological Education e.V. (ECTE)

Minutes of Telephone Conversation

Date of the conversation:	2023-11-06
Representative of ECTE:	Marvin Oxenham
Representative of EQAR:	Melinda Szabo

1. ECTE has made a Substantive Change Report on 2023-30-08. In order to prepare the deliberations of the Register Committee on the report, EQAR contacted ECTE via telephone to clarify the matters below.

2. ECTE clarified the matters by means of a telephone conversation.

Site-visits

3. ECTE explained that in carrying out the activity "Institutional accreditation of micro-credential providers", site visits (on-site or online) will be required in case of providers that have not been accredited by ECTE. The protocols for the online review are described in ECTE's Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs. [1] In case of an online site visit, the experts will utilise video-conferencing facilities for interviews; they will sample a number of teaching materials in terms of completeness, clarity and suitability; carry out a check of the virtual learning environment, the navigation, access; interviews will be conducted with different actors such as academic administrators, tutors, students, ministry supervisor, graduates, etc.

4. In case of alternative providers that have gone through an ECTE institutional accreditation, a site-visit will normally not be required; a desk-based review will be performed by peer experts without a site visit.

5. The peer-expert group is supported by a Micro-credential Review Secretary (staff) and will include a student member. ECTE will provide specific training for all MCP-VETs concerning the accreditation of micro-credential providers through a compulsory training course on the ICETE Academy.[2]

Follow-up

6. The follow-up will depend on the outcome of the accreditation. In case the MC provider is given an accreditation with recommendations

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[1] https://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs.pdf The online site visit protocol was developed during the pandemic and will be adapted for the institutional accreditation of MC providers.

[2] See https://icete.academy/course/view.php?id=244

(meaning substantial compliance to one or more standards), progression must be reported in the annual progress report (APR).

7. Providers that are subject to requirements will not be granted accreditation until the requirements are met. During this phase, the MCP provider will be listed on the ECTE directory as 'Under Review'.

8. ECTE will require an Annual Progress Report from all micro-credential providers (MC-APR) that will include: a) reports on changes in current MCs, b) reports on new MCs, c) reports on retired MCs (all reports will include links to provider's website). The reports will substantiate whether all MCs on offer that bear the ECTE MPC accreditation label have undergone the IQA procedures described in ECTE's standards.

9. ECTE also ensure that the title of micro-credentials do not contain protected academic nomenclature or wording that may cause confusion with a full QF-EHEA qualification (e.g. bachelor, master, postgraduate, undergraduate, degree, etc) (see Guideline Criterion MCP 4).

10. ECTE further informed the EQAR Secretariat that intends to prepare a thematic analysis following the implementation (concluding the piloting phase) of this activity.

11. ECTE also informed the EQAR Secretariat that it intends to include the activity of MPC accreditation in its internal quality assurance procedures through the Annual Internal Review, Improvement and Monitoring process (AIRIM). This will include stakeholder input.

12. The ECTE also brought to the attention of the Secretariat the External Quality Assurance of Micro-credentials policy that was submitted with the substantive change report. This policy integrates ECTE's general internal quality assurance policy with specific application of ESG 2, ESG 3.4, ESG 3.5 and ESG 3.6 to micro-credential provider accreditation activity.[3]

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3 https://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/External-quality-assurance-for-microcredentials.pdf

MICRO-CREDENTIAL PROVIDERS

(NOVEMBER 2023)

This document is part of a set of guidelines that relate to ECTE accreditation activities. In particular, it contains the *Guidelines for Micro-credential Providers (MCP)* including criteria and procedures, MCP accreditation standards, good practice guidelines and relevant appendices.

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1. INTRODUCTION TO MICRO-CREDENTIALS

1.1 - DEFINITION

Within Europe, the definition of a micro-credential (MC) is:

'The record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning.

These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences leading to micro- credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs.

Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be standalone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity'. [1]

To help bridge the lack of a common global agreement on the term the UNESCO[2] offers a further definition whereby a micro-credential:

- Is a record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do.
- Includes assessment based on clearly defined standards and is awarded by a trusted provider.
- Has standalone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning.
- Meets the standards required by relevant quality assurance.

1.2 - COMMON FEATURES

Common features of micro-credentials include:

1. They are a transparent proof of acquisition of one or more learning outcomes[3].
2. They operate within a narrow field of learning.
3. They follow a short learning experience.
4. They feature reliable assessment of the learning outcomes against transparent standards.
5. They certify competences.
6. They are relevant. This is sometimes referred to as 'just in time learning'
7. They privilege student-centred learning.
8. They an authentic formal higher education credential (not a 'course' leading to a credential). This responds to the misconception that micro-credentials are really nothing new - since short courses have been around for a long time. Micro-credentials are meant to sit alongside traditional macro-credentials and to be recognised as self-standing qualifications within a learner's portfolio and curriculum.
9. They can be delivered by a variety of means, including distance and online education.
10. They can be delivered in a variety of modes, including full and part time, intensives, workshops, synchronous, asynchronous and self-paced online leaning.
11. They can address different levels of the QF-EHEA/EQF.
12. They have flexible access requirements.
13. They are subject to quality assurance procedures and standards.
14. They can be delivered by HEIs and alternative providers alike. [4]

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[1] https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/micro-credentials%20brochure%20updated.pdf , It should be noted, however, that the term is still mainly used at EU and EHEA policy level, as 'most EHEA countries do not have an official definition nor a widespread usage of the term. However, it is generally agreed that micro-credentials are small volumes of learning and are mainly part of the lifelong learning provision that aims to respond to the needs of society and learners for reskilling and upskilling… Among the terms used (for the learning unit and/or the certification), the most common ones are badges, certificates, module certificates, partial qualifications, micro-qualifications and supplementary qualifications… Some countries use the term micro-credential to refer to both the learning activity and the certification.' (p. 6, https://www.ehea.info/Upload/IMINQA_MC_report_Approaches_to_Quality_Assurance_of_Micro_credentials.pdf).

[2] *Towards a common definition of micro-credentials* https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381668

[3] 'Learning outcomes' means statements regarding what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy Annex I https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN (C 189/20)

[4] A 'provider' can be any actor that provides micro-credentials in terms of teaching, classes, learning materials, etc. This may include higher education institutions (public, private, academic, professional, preparatory, initial, continuing, adult, local, foreign, cross-border, European or international), as well as alternative providers, including employers, companies, social partners, NGOs, public authorities and others. Micro-credentials may be provided through a cooperation of different providers… The ESG apply to all higher education offered in the EHEA, in whatever format, duration or

15. They can be developed in collaboration with others (e.g. other HEIs, alternative providers, employers, learners, NGOs, charities, public authorities). [5]
16. They can be organised in pan-regional catalogues.[6]
17. They can offer a smooth transfer of knowledge from recent research to education.
18. They are portable, usually produced in digital format with certified methods for identification to ensure authenticity.
19. They can facilitate learning pathways, are portable and may be combined into smaller or larger micro-credentials or qualifications. This process is called stacking.[7]
20. They can: a) consist of modules or courses extracted from existing programmes (e.g. from a full qualification), b) be designed as original, self-standing micro-credentials or c) be a combination of existing and new materials. This source of the micro-credential should be specified in the description of the micro-credential.

1.3 - COMMON FORMAT

Micro-credentials share a common format that includes the following elements[8]:

- Information on the learner / identification of the learner
- Information on the provider: information on the awarding body or institution (including status as HEI or alternative provider), including country, a signature or seal of the provider and/or awarding body or institution
- Information on the micro-credential: title, country/region of the issuer, date of issuance or date of assessment, verification of authenticity
- Information on the learning experience: learning outcomes, workload (in ECTS), form of participation in the learning experience, type of assessment and type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential
- Information on the QF level: QF-EHEA and EQF level (if self-certified/referenced), ISCED level & subject area code, NQF level when possible (national qualification framework)
- Form of participation in the learning activity and delivery mode (on-site, blended, online, situated, etc.)
- Access requirements

Other optional elements, where relevant, might include (non-exhaustive list):

- Prerequisites needed to enrol in the learning activity
- Source of the micro-credential (existing courses, original or a combination).
- Supervision and identity verification during assessment (unsupervised with no identity verification, supervised with no identity verification, supervised online, or onsite with identity verification)
- Grade achieved
- Integration/stackability options (standalone, independent micro-credential/integrated, stackable towards another credential by the same provider)
- Further information

1.4 - ECTE QA OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

In the dynamic and varied landscape of micro-credentials in Europe, the ECTE offers institutional accreditation of micro-credential providers within the following boundaries:

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mode of delivery. Hence, they can be used by HEIs and alternative providers alike, in case they deliver micro-credentials on higher education level. Alternative providers can also establish internal QA arrangements that are compatible with the ESG in order to align themselves with the European framework for micro-credentials. https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/03/Micro-credentials_Framework_final-1.pdf).

[5] Collaboration may take different forms: 1) development and design micro-credentials in collaboration, 2) agreement that the micro- credential is taught by experts from industry, 3) develop professional mentoring systems through which learners can be linked with practitioners in a given field, 4) inclusion of work placements as a compulsory element of the credential, 5) recognition of micro-credential completion as first stage of their hiring process (https://www.ehea.info/Upload/IMINQA_MC_report_Approaches_to_Quality_Assurance_of_Micro_credentials.pdf).

[6] See, for example, https://nea.certificationbank.com//

[7] See more on stacking in Appendix C.

[8] See Annex I of EU-MC https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (p.27). This division of tasks firmly places responsibility for assuring the quality of provision of micro- credentials with the education providers. They are expected to put in place explicit QA policies and processes corresponding to the expectations laid down in Part 1 of the ESG, provide transparent information about these and include learners in all steps of development, implementation and evaluation of micro-credentials. https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/03/Micro-credentials_Framework_final-1.pdf (p. 6).

1. Size. ECTE micro-credential providers may design micro-credentials from 1 ECTS (25-30 hours of learning) to a maximum of 30 ECTS (750-900 hours of learning).
2. Delivery means and mode. ECTE micro-credential providers may offer micro-credentials through a wide range of delivery means and modes, including full online delivery.
3. Access. ECTE micro-credential providers may implement flexible access requirements, including a 'no requirement' option.
4. Source. ECTE micro-credential providers may: a) extract modules or courses from existing programmes and offer them as micro-credentials, b) design original/self-standing micro-credentials, or combine a) and b).
5. Collaboration. ECTE micro-credential providers may: a) design and offer micro-credentials independently or b) cooperate in partnerships with other entities (e.g. professionals, faith-based communities, missions, NGOs, etc).
6. Higher education qualifications. ECTE micro-credential providers must offer higher education learning opportunities corresponding to QF-EHEA learning outcomes (equivalent to EFQ levels 5-8).
7. Provider status. The status of ECTE micro-credential providers may equally be that of higher education institutions or of alternative providers. Micro-credentials delivered by both kinds of providers are considered comparable in level and quality, having been equally assessed against the ESG. [9]
8. Relevance and scope. ECTE micro-credential providers offer learners knowledge, skills and competences that are generally relevant to the fields of Christian theology, religion and practice. The outcomes of these micro-credentials typically respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs that can be served by theology graduates.
9. European reference points. ECTE micro-credential providers will be accredited in line with the recommendations, standards and best QA practices in the European Higher Education Area. In recognition that this is a developing sector, the current Guidelines may undergo revision. See Appendix G for references.

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[9] '… caution should be taken when labelling only micro- credentials provided by HEIs. They should not be portrayed as somehow better than the ones offered by non-HEI providers. HEIs do not have the monopoly on offering micro-credentials and we should not give the impression that we consider HEIs to be superior in offering them. It is expressed that there should not be a separation between micro-credentials offered by HEIs and by other providers, as this goes against the policy of recognising informal and non-formal learning'
https://www.ehea.info/Upload/IMINQA_WG%20on%20MCs_minutes_02-09-2022.pdf.

2. QA CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

Accreditation of providers delivering micro-credentials is substantially an institutional accreditation. The formal outcome is Micro-Credential Provider accreditation (MCP accreditation). The following are the criteria and the procedures to achieve this outcome.

2.1 – Criteria for the accreditation of Micro-credential Providers

To successfully obtain accreditation as a micro-credential provider (MCP accreditation) the following criteria must be satisfied.

- Compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines for Micro-credential Providers* listed in this document (Section 3 below). This matches compliance to ESG (Part 1).
- Compliance with micro-credential certification according to the standard format (see Appendix A).

A simplified procedure is in place for providers holding a valid external review that demonstrates compliance to the ESG (Part 1) (see Section 4 below).

2.2 – Procedures for accreditation of Micro-credential Providers

Given the small volume of learning involved in micro-credentials, providers undergo an institutional review that validates them as micro-credential provider (MCP accreditation), with no need for accreditation of each micro-credential. This means that:

- MCP accreditation focuses on the provider rather than on single micro-credentials.[10]
- Individual micro-credentials do not undergo scrutiny by the ECTE.
- It is possible that no micro-credentials are yet delivered at the time of the first review.
- Once a provider is accredited, it can generate and offer as many micro-credentials as needed without further review procedures.

To ensure that the provider is using the ECTE MCP accreditation label only for trusted/verified micro-credentials,

The procedures for achieving accreditation as a micro-credential provider (MCP) are as follows:[11]

1. **Application**. The provider applies through the *MCP Application.*[12]

2. **Authorisation**. The ECTE examines the eligibility of the application, assembles a VET panel, and arranges an agreed date for the online review.

3. **MC-SER.** The provider produces a *MCP-Self Evaluation Report (MCP-SER)* (a template for this report is found in Appendix B). The MCP-SER must:

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[10] 'To be fit-for-purpose and to avoid overburdening the institutions unnecessarily, the focus of external QA should be on the institutional approach to micro-credentials and their explicit inclusion in existing or new processes. The external QA should ensure that the HEIs offering micro-credentials have a reliable and well-built system to monitor their quality internally. As the procedures for programme level external evaluation are extensive, it would not be suitable to apply them to micro-credentials in the same way as to study programmes, given that micro- credentials are much smaller volumes of learning and expected to be updated frequently to respond to societal needs' .https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/03/Micro-credentials_Framework_final-1.pdf .

[11] Simplified procedures are in place for providers that already have ECTE institutional accreditation. Please see Section 4.

[12] See http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/ Providers without existing ECTE institutional accreditation select the option: 'We do not have ECTE institutional accreditation'. Providers with ECTE institutional accreditation select the option: We already have ECTE institutional accreditation'.

a) Provide evidence of compliance to the *Guidelines for Micro-Credential Providers* in Section 3 below (and hence to ESG Part 1).

b) Provide a template for micro-credentials that follows the standard format (see Appendix A) and one example of a fully designed micro-credential.[13]

c) If micro-credentials are being delivered in modes that have not been previously subjected to external quality assurance reviews (e.g. by online or distance education) the MCP-SER may need to respond to additional standards.

The MCP-SER and any supporting documents must be submitted digitally, in English, at least two months prior to the date of the online review.

4. **Online review**. The VET panel performs an online review on the designated date, analysing the MCP-SER and supporting documentation and utilizing video-conferencing facilities for interviews. The protocols for the online review are described in Appendix H (adapted from those already in use in the Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs).[14] A site visit will normally be required for providers that are new to ECTE's accreditation processes and/or that do not hold a valid ESG-based institutional review outcome.

5. **Review report**. The ECTE produce a *MCP Review Report* which normally includes commendations, recommendations, and requirements.

6. **Review/evaluation fees.** After the approval and publication of the Review Report, the provider is invoiced by ECTE for MCP review fees.[15]

7. **Decision-making process and publication.** Through a vote by simple majority, the Accreditation Commission will either.

a. Grant MCP accreditation, meaning full compliance to all standards.

b. Grant MPC accreditation with recommendations, meaning substantial compliance to one or more standards. Recommendations indicate areas of further improvement and development, and progression must be reported in the MC-APR.

c. Grants MCP accreditation but set forth requirements, meaning non-compliance to one or more standards. Providers that are subject to requirements will not be granted accreditation until the requirements are met. During this phase, the MCP provider will be listed on the ECTE directory as 'Under Review'.

d. Does not grant MPC accreditation and provides further instructions to the institution if it wishes to re-apply

8. **Publication.** The accreditation decision, together with the integral *MCP Review Report*, is published on the ECTE MCP Directory and communicated to the DEQAR. The provider can include the claim "ECTE Accredited Micro-Credential Provider" on its website and publications and use the ECTE Micro-Credential Provider logo.

9. **Follow-up** is envisioned at various levels, depending on the outcomes of the accreditation decision (see 9 above).

a. When accreditation is granted, the provider follows up with an MCP - Annual Progress Report (see below).

b. When accreditation is granted with recommendations, the provider reports on progress in its MPC-Annual Progress Report which are noted and monitored by the Accreditation Director and successive review visits. Progress relating to recommendations receive special attention in the 5-year-reaccreditation process.

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[13] It is understood that these micro-credentials may not yet be delivered, but an example of a full design will allow the review to verify the compliance to the standard micro-credential format.

[14] https://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Guidelines-for-Site-Visits-and-VETs.pdf

[15] See http://ecte.eu/introducing/fees/ This is set at €2000 for the online review, normally involving two VETs one staff person. Additional fees and VET travel expenses may incur should a site visit be required.

c. When accreditation is subject to requirements, the provider responds in direct correspondence with the Accreditation Director providing evidence as the requirements are met. During this correspondence, the Accreditation Director can provide further clarification on the requirements. Documentation related to the fulfilment of requirements are submitted to the Accreditation Commission. Once Accreditation Commission deems requirements to be met, the Accreditation Director will confirm this in writing to the provider and grant MCP accreditation (the tag 'Under Review' will be removed from the website directory). This establishes the start of the five-year period until re-accreditation.

d. When accreditation is not granted, the Accreditation Director will contact the provider to provide further guidance should a new application be sought.

10. **Annual reporting.** A MC-Annual Progress Report (MC-APR) is required which includes:

1. Changes in current MCs (with link to provider's website).
2. Reporting on new MCs (with link to provider's website). To ensure that the provider is using the ECTE MCP accreditation label only for trusted/verified micro-credentials, the report will substantiate that the MCs on offer have undergone the IQA procedures described in standard MCP 1 (see below).
3. Lists of retired MCs (with link to provider's website). For retired MC's, provisions for teach-out situations are included as necessary.

The report will be signed by the individual responsible for the provider for micro-credentials.

A response to the report will be given by the Accreditation Director after deliberation with the Accreditation Commission as needed.

11. **Catalogue.** In order to facilitate the production of a general catalogue of active micro-credentials and update the DEQAR, the provider informs the ECTE through the MC-APR on the activation of all new micro-credentials as well as on their retirement.

12. **Annual fees**. The provider pays annual fees for MCP accreditation. These fees are in addition to other ECTE fees if present.[16]

13. **Cyclical review.** The provider undergoes a 5-year cyclical review as outlined in ECTE *Criteria and Procedures*. MCP accreditation is valid until the next cyclical review and applies to all micro-credentials offered or retired throughout this period (see standard MCP 10 below).

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[16] See http://ecte.eu/introducing/fees/ This is set at €950 per year (there is no per student fee).

3. STANDARDS FOR MICRO-CREDENTIAL PROVIDER ACCREDITATION

The primary responsibility for the quality of micro-credentials lies with providers. The role of the quality assurance agency is to support providers in developing and monitoring compliance to agreed standards for quality and to ensure the public and stakeholders about their effectiveness. [17]

While preserving flexibility and encouraging providers to be innovative, the ECTE is committed to foster trust and transparency in relation to micro-credentials through agreed standards. Accreditation as a Micro-credential Provider (MCP accreditation) requires compliance with the standards outlined below that are a reflection of the European Standards and Guidance (ESG part 1) used in the European Higher Education Area.[18]

MCP 1 – Policies for quality assurance[19]

Providers have public policies for internal quality assurance (IQA) that are applied to micro-credentials. These policies also cover micro-credentials that are subcontracted or carried out in partnership with other parties. [20] Providers publish IQA policies and certify their application to each micro-credential that bears the ECTE MPC accreditation label.

IQA polices are developed and implemented by internal stakeholders through appropriate structures and processes, involve external stakeholders[21] and cover the entire scope of standards as described in ESG 1.[22]

MCP 2 – Design and approval of micro-credentials

Providers have formal institutional processes for the design and approval of micro-credentials that involve stakeholders.[23]

Micro-credentials are designed to be level-specific and meet the learning outcomes of Levels 5, 6 and 7 of the *European Qualification Framework* in parallel with the short, first or second cycle descriptors of the *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area* (QF-EHEA).[24] Micro-credentials may also include additional learning outcomes which are not specified in the QF-EHEA.

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[17] 'Different micro-credentials can be combined into a degree or other type of certification. Programme developers should consider the stackability of a micro-credential and how they might fit in the wider offer of the HEI, when designing the content and structure of a micro- credential programme' https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/03/Micro-credentials_Framework_final-1.pdf .

[18] These standards are a direct reflection of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 1). They also incorporate the *EU Council Recommendation on a European Approach to Micro-credentials* (EU-MC), the *EU Annex V to the EQF Recommendation* (EQF QA) and the EQAVET indicators (EQAVET).

[19] See Appendix F for further guidance on the IQA of micro-credentials.

[20] IQA policies covering collaboration with other entities include the requirement of comprehensive MOUs between the provider and the collaborating party. The IQA responsibility, however, cannot be franchised and always lies with the accredited provider.

[21] ESG 1.1. External stakeholders must include micro-credential students who are involved as in monitoring and review and their feedback is considered as part of the continuous improvement cycle. EU-MC Principle 8: Learner centred https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (p.33).

[22] The scope of ESG 1 is covered in the ECTE standards for micro-credentials that follow: MCP1 - MCP10.

[23] ESG 1.2. See also EU-MC Principle 2: Transparency https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (p.32) and EQF QA Principle 4: 'Involve all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the process' https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN (C 189/25).

[24] See Appendix D. The QF-EHEA are designed to describe outcomes at the completion of a full qualification cycle, which is clearly not possible for a short qualification. Hence micro-credentials should express contribution to these outcomes.

Micro-credentials are designed to be relevant, to meet identified learning needs[25] and to match the profile of learners. To qualify within the field of theological education, learning outcomes normally include reference to outcomes related to Christian theology or religion and/or cognate disciplines and consider elements of holistic integration and formation that are typical of theological education. [26]

Micro-credentials are designed to reflect the expected student workload in ECTS (from a minimum of 1 ECTS to a maximum of 30 ECTS).

MCP 3 – Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Providers ensure that micro-credentials are delivered in ways that encourage students to take an active role in creating the learning process. [27]

Providers select delivery modes and pedagogical methods that best enable the learning process and that cater to a diverse student population. When distance, online or blended delivery modes are used for micro-credentials, they are adequately designed and supported.

Providers ensure that assessment is designed to allow students to demonstrate the extent to which intended learning outcomes have been achieved in ways that are fair, consistent, varied and supported by clearly stated procedures.

Appropriate complaints and appeals procedures are available to micro-credential students.

MCP 4 – Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Providers of micro-credentials consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.[28]

Admissions. Providers implement flexible and transparent policies concerning the admissions (access) to micro-credentials.[29]

Progression. Although there is normally no progression between micro-credentials, providers implement coherent and flexible learning pathways within their own educational portfolio that consider the stacking of micro-credentials into larger/complete qualifications.[30]

Recognition. Providers have policies and procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) that allow recognition of micro-credentials delivered by other providers[31] and recognition of non-formal and informal learning that match the learning outcomes of micro-credentials.

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[25] EU-MC Principle 3: Relevance https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (p.32). See also EQAVET Indicator 9: Identify training needs in the labor market https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1570&langId=en

[26] Providers seek to integrate 'academically focused and competence- oriented learning activities with spiritual formation and character education' (ECTE *Standards and Guidelines*, B.1.1).

[27] ESG 1.3

[28] ESG 1.4

[29] It is possible to design multiple admission options for each micro-credential, but they will determine the use that the student can make of the qualification. Access may be restricted to the level of the micro-credential (e.g. an EQF 7 micro-credential would require a previous EQF 6 qualification) but it may also be opened to admissions without any qualification (in which case the wording 'no access qualification' would be indicated on the micro-credential certification). In the latter case, the micro-credential would normally not transfer or stack into other formal HE qualifications.   Care must be taken in open admissions policies to not set up students for failure.

[30] EU-MC Principle 5 Learning pathways https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf . See more on stackability in Appendix E.

[31] Validation of non-formal and informal learning, means that obtaining a micro-credential is possible following assessment of learning outcomes, resulting from non-formal and informal learning.

Certification. Providers generate certification of micro-credentials according to a standard format (see Appendix A).[32] The certification of micro-credentials also contains sufficient information to check the identity of the credential-holder (learner), the legal identity of the issuer and the date and place of issuance of the micro-credential.[33] The title of the micro-credential does not contain protected academic nomenclature or wording that may cause confusion with a full QF-EHEA qualification (e.g. bachelor, master, postgraduate, undergraduate, degree, etc).

MCP 5 – Educational staff

The expertise of educational staff involved in the design and delivery micro-credentials is fit for purpose. This includes both professional experiences related to the intended learning outcomes, and academic qualifications that are normally one level above the level of the micro-credential.

Providers apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment of educational staff[34] and provide a supportive environment that is conducive to effective work.

As appropriate, providers encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.[35]

MCP 6 – Learning resources and student support

Providers have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities related to micro-credentials. Providers ensure that learning facilities (including digital facilities), learning resources[36] and student support services (including administrative support) are adequate and readily accessible to micro-credential students.[37]

MCP 7 – Information management

Providers have systems and policies to analyse and use of relevant data for the effective management of micro-credentials.[38] These include tools to collect, monitor and act on information on micro-credential student progression and dropout rates.

MCP 8 – Public information

Providers publish information about micro-credentials which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible. [39] Public includes an accurate description of the nature, content, outcomes, access criteria, nature of qualification, delivery mode, teaching and learning procedures, possibilities for recognition

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[32] https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/03/Micro-credentials_Framework_final-1.pdf
[33] EU-MC Principle 9: Authentic https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (p.33).
[34] ESG 1.5
[35] ESG 1.5
[36] Learning resources are provided to meet the learning outcomes at the level of micro-credentials being offered.
[37] ESG 1.6
[38] ESG 1.7. Data is used, for example, to build on good practice, evaluate micro-credential relevance, assess design and delivery, create student population profiles, collect student satisfaction surveys, evaluate learning resources and students support systems, analyze career enhancement of graduates and deal with progression, success, failure, and dropout rates. Ongoing monitoring of micro-credentials may also include (as applicable), participation rates, completion rates, placement rates of graduates, utilisation of acquired skills in the workplace and prevalence of vulnerable groups (EQAVET Indicator 3-6 and 8 https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1570&langId=en).
[39] ESG 1.8

of prior learning, assessment procedures, certification options, stacking opportunities, graduate employment information and quality assurance of micro-credentials.

MCP 9 – On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Providers monitor and periodically review micro-credentials to evaluate the quality of design and delivery, the agility of the launch process, the ongoing relevance of the micro-credential, and strategies for either improvement or retirement of micro-credentials. [40]

MCP 10 – Cyclical external quality assurance

Providers undergo regular external quality assurance (EQA) of their micro-credentialling activities on a cyclical basis (normally every 5 years).[41]

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[40] ESG 1.9
[41] ESG 1.10. The standards for ECTE cyclical reviews are laid out in part 3 of this document: Standards for Micro-credential Providers.

4. SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURES FOR MCP ACCREDITATION

Providers holding a valid external review that certifies compliance to the ESG (Part 1), may use the following simplified procedures for micro-credential provider accreditation (MCP accreditation).

1. **Application**. The provider applies through the *MCP Application.*[42] As part of the application, the provider submits the results of a valid external review demonstrating compliance with ESG 1.

2. **Authorisation**. The ECTE examines the eligibility of the application, assembles a VET panel, and arranges an agreed date for the online-based review.

3. **S-MPC-SER**. The provider produces a *Simplified MCP-Self Evaluation Report (S-MCP-SER)* (a template for this report is found in Appendix C). The S-MCP-SER must:

   a) Provide evidence that ESG 1 standards are being applied to micro-credentials.[43]
   b) Provide a template for micro-credentials that follows the standard format as illustrated in Appendix A and one example of a fully designed micro-credential.[44]
   c) If micro-credentials are being delivered in modes that have not been previously subjected to external quality assurance reviews (e.g.by online or distance education) the S-MCP-SER may need to respond to additional standards.

   The S-MCP-SER and any supporting documents are submitted digitally, in English, at least two months prior to the review.

4. **Online review**. The VET panel performs an online review on the designated date, analysing the S-MCP-SER and supporting documentation.

5. **Review report**. The ECTE produces a *MCP Review Report* which normally includes commendations, recommendations, and requirements.

6. **Review/evaluation fees.** After the approval and publication of the *MCP Review Report*, the provider is invoiced by ECTE for the external review.[45]

7. **Decision-making process and publication.** The ECTE Accreditation Commission decides on granting MCP Accreditation. The accreditation decision, together with the integral *MCP Review Report*, is published on the ECTE the ECTE MCP Directory and communicated to the DEQAR. The provider can include the claim "ECTE Accredited Micro-Credential Provider" on its website and publications.

8. **Catalogue.** In order to facilitate the production of a general catalogue of active micro-credentials and to allow interface with the DEQAR, the provider informs the ECTE on the activation of all new micro-credentials as well as on their retirement (including provisions for teach-out situations).

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[42] See http://ecte.eu/qa/forms/ Providers without existing ECTE institutional accreditation select the option: 'We do not have ECTE institutional accreditation'. Providers with ECTE institutional accreditation select the option: We already have ECTE institutional accreditation'.
[43] Evidence needs to cover all standards in ESG 1 as they relate to micro-credentials: policies for quality assurance, design and approval of programmes, student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, student admission, progression, recognition and certification, teaching staff, learning resources and student support, information management, public information, on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes, cyclical external quality assurance. Providers are advised to consult the MCP standards in Section 3 of the current document for a more complete description of these ESG 1 standards and how they relate to micro-credentials.
[44] It is understood that these micro-credentials may not yet be delivered, but a full design will allow the review to verify the compliance to micro-credential design through the template and one example.
[45] See http://ecte.eu/introducing/fees/ This is set at €2000 for the online review, normally involving two VETs one staff person. Additional fees and VET travel expenses may incur should a site visit be required.

9. **Review**. The provider undergoes the 5-year cyclical review as outlined in the ECTE *Criteria and Procedures*. MCP Accreditation is valid until the next cyclical review and applies to all micro-credentials offered or retired throughout this period.

10. **Fees**. The provider pays annual fees for MCP Accreditation. These fees are in addition to other ECTE fees.[46]

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[46] See http://ecte.eu/introducing/fees/ This is set at €950 per year (there is no per student fee).

5. GOOD PRACTICES FOR MICRO-CREDENTIAL PROVIDERS

This section features a list of good practices for higher education/micro-credential providers, including practices for online education (should this mode of delivery mode be employed). Adherence to these good practices is recommended but not required for MCP accreditation.

GENERAL GOOD PRACTICES FOR MICRO-CREDENTIAL PROVIDERS

- Providers have **appropriate governance** that represents and involves their stakeholders and constitutes the body to which executive leadership is accountable. Management is in place to guide, inspire and administer the organisation to achieve the provider's mission through strategic planning and implementation.
- Providers have **decision-making processes** in place that evaluate, advise and approve micro-credentials. The processes normally involves a faculty council or academic steering committee, the internal quality assurance department and a higher level of the provider's governance structure.
- The activities of the provider are supported by **strategic planning** that is based on valid data and involvement of relevant stakeholders. The delivery of micro-credentials is represented in institutional planning and budgeting.
- **Collaboration** between education and training organisations, employers, social partners, other providers and users of micro-credentials is encouraged, in order to increase the relevance of the micro-credentials.
- Providers have a written **collaboration strategy** to design, produce and deliver relevant micro-credentials with other peers and with stakeholders (e.g. HEIs, alternative providers, employers, learners, NGOs, charities, public authorities, ecclesial bodies, etc).
- Where micro-credentials are developed in **collaboration** with others, memorandums of understanding/mutual agreements are in place between all parties. These memorandums include financial issues.
- Micro-credentials **design and approval** involves students as well as external expertise and reference points.
- Human resources are tailored to the objectives and activities of the provider and are monitored to ensure personal sustainability, **realistic workloads** and avoidance of 'job drift' (i.e. work done outside of predictable schedules).
- **Administration** staff is adequately qualified, trained and equipped for the management of micro-credentials.
- As far as it is possible in the delivery of short learning experiences, providers foster a healthy sense of **community life**. Transparent and truthful expectations are laid out in the context of micro-credential delivery around what can and cannot be achieved in terms of community, pastoral and spiritual support and the cultivation of responsible character.
- The provider's governance, management and staff are in **good standing** within the faith-communities they represent and exhibit character traits that are worthy of imitation by students.
- Providers nurture awareness of local and global cultures and contexts and develop **relevant** micro-credentials. Providers design micro-credentials to take into consideration the four purposes of higher education in Europe. [47]

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[47] 1) preparation for sustainable employment; 2) preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies; 3) personal development; 4) the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation. See *Council of Europe Recommendation*
https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/PublicResponsibility/Explanatory%20Memorandum%20public%20responsibility_EN.asp

- Providers implement student **communication strategies** that are suitable for short learning experiences. These strategies are regularly assessed through student feedback. Communication to students is planned to be accurate and timely, including, for example, timetables and deadlines, exam dates, assessment feedback, fees due, final results and receipt of the qualification.
- Any action planned or taken as a result of **periodic review** of micro-credentials should be communicated to all those concerned.
- Student services include a micro-credential **induction programme**, featuring a general orientation to student services, information on the delivery mode, introduction to how teaching and learning will occur, timetables and important dates, instructions on course delivery and assessment submission, and instructions on how to access technical, pastoral, or administrative support when needed.
- **Student services** are tailored to consider special needs, vulnerable groups, exceptional circumstances, diversity in student population, issues of mobility across educational systems and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching.[48]
- In countries with little theological literature in the vernacular, foreign **language** resources may be employed, provided that they are clearly utilisable by the educational staff and students or that they have adequate translation provisions.
- Providers have appropriate internal micro-credential **record-keeping procedures** that include updated contact information, student files, grades and certificates, and finances.
- Providers have adequate **technical infrastructure** and qualified personnel who assure that all related systems and procedures function correctly, safely, and reliably.
- **Financial planning** and budgetary procedures are in place, and a comprehensive, approved business plan matches the mission and strategic planning of the institution. Fundraising and other income sources are appropriately allocated.
- Fair policies, processes and **remuneration** provision are in place for both employees and for the occasional contracting of external experts involved in design and delivery of specific micro-credentials. Contracts are in line with local legal requirements.
- All student **fees** are transparent and public. Fees give due consideration both to the financial ability of the students and to the expenses of the institution. Scholarship programmes are administered according to written regulations with formal records of action taken.
- Both personnel **compensation** and student **fees are reviewed** regularly.
- **Assessment** is performed under the direct responsibility of the provider and is reliable, regardless of the assessment method used. Assessment is fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures and transparent criteria.[49] Assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the micro-credential learning outcomes and competences have been achieved.[50]
- Providers understand that micro-credentials are **owned by the credential-holder** (the learner) and enable systems whereby micro-credentials may be stored and shared easily by the credential-holder including secure digital wallets (e.g. Europass).
- **Data** is held in line with the General Data Protection Regulation. The infrastructure for storing data is based on open standards and data models. This ensures interoperability and seamless exchange of data and allows for smooth checks of data authenticity.[51]

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[48] ESG 1.6
[49] EQF QA Principle 2: 'Ensure valid and reliable assessment' https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN (C 189/25).
[50] See https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/03/Micro-credentials_Framework_final-1.pdf and EU-MC Principle 4: Valid assessment https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (p.32).
[51] EU-MC Principle 7: Portable https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (p.34).

GOOD PRACTICES FOR ONLINE DELIVERY OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

- Where online **tutoring** practices are in place (i.e. facilitating learning through existing study materials rather than direct instruction), tutors are sufficiently qualified and proficient in the competences addressed by the micro-credential they are tutoring. The learning content is normally developed with the oversight of educational staff with the required qualifications.
- As appropriate, social media are used to increase informal communication and providers leverage situated learning contexts to enhance **community** engagement.
- Ethical codes (e.g. netiquette codes) are in place and are used to encourage the cultivation of **responsible character** in online learning communities.
- As appropriate, institutions **cooperate** with other academic and professional communities in sharing and producing digital resources that support online micro-credentials.
- Providers address the obstacles of **remote communication** and student isolation. Students are informed about response times and about communication technologies with educational and non-educational staff. Digital communication lines are regularly tested to ensure their reliability, fruition, and student satisfaction levels.
- For micro-credentials delivered online, study facilities normally take the form of a **virtual learning environment** (VLE/LMS) that is user-friendly, complete, functional, uncluttered, easily navigable, aesthetically pleasant and security protected.
- Consideration is given to the **devices** used by students and to **network accessibility**. This includes consideration of mobile learning.
- If **digital learning resources** are used, this is done in full compliance with copyright and intellectual property regulations.
- Attention is given to issues of **technological** progress and fruition and to upskilling staff in these technologies. Providers have contingency plans that address the possibilities of disrupted internet service both from the institutional and the student's side. Students receive timely and effective technical assistance from the provider. Providers ensure that the technologies that undergird online delivery (i.e. VLE, Internet access, servers or web hosting service, cybersecurity, system updates, backups, etc.) are available, are functioning properly and are appropriate to meet the demands of the number of users.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Micro-credential format

Micro-credentials share a common format that includes the following elements[52]:

- Information on the learner / identification of the learner
- Information on the provider: information on the awarding body or institution (including status as HEI or alternative provider), including country, a signature or seal of the provider and/or awarding body or institution
- Information on the micro-credential: title, country/region of the issuer, language of delivery/assessment, date of issuance or date of assessment, verification of authenticity
- Information on the learning experience: learning outcomes, workload (in ECTS), form of participation in the learning experience and type of assessment
- Information on the QF level: NQF level (when possible), QF-EHEA and EQF level (if self-certified/referenced), ISCED level & subject area code, SQF level (if needed)
- Form of participation in the learning activity and delivery mode (on-site, blended, online, situated, etc.)
- Information on the type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential

Other optional elements, where relevant, might include (non-exhaustive list):

- Source of teaching and learning (e.g., extracted from existing programmes, original/self-standing or combination)
- Access requirements / Prerequisites needed to enrol in the learning activity
- Supervision and identity verification during assessment (unsupervised with no identity verification, supervised with no identity verification, supervised online, or onsite with identity verification)
- Grade achieved
- Integration/stackability options (standalone, independent micro- credential/integrated, stackable towards another credential)
- Prerequisite/s (if any) or recommended prior learning
- Expiration date (if the micro-credential is due for review or resubmission)
- Industry alignment and recognition (e.g. if accepted for ordination purposes, for mission deployment, etc. Recognising body to be specified, e.g. Church of England, Operation Mobilization, etc)
- Industry/occupation (what occupations or career pathways the micro-credential may lead to)
- Further information

The following is a fictional example of micro-credential design. This example imagines a provider who aims to train faith community leaders who are trying to facilitate online relational communities during the COVID pandemic lockdown.

Category	Example of Micro-credential description	Development and design notes
Information on the learner / Identification of the learner	Nikos Georgiou Means of identification of the learner ID Austria – ID 88764FFx	Systems need to be in place to identify the learner, possibly with more than one type of identification (e.g. verified digital signatures). In the example, ID Austria is used as a digital identification service in the country of delivery of the micro-credential.

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[52] See Annex I of EU-MC https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (p.27). This division of tasks firmly places responsibility for assuring the quality of provision of micro- credentials with the education providers. They are expected to put in place explicit QA policies and processes corresponding to the expectations laid down in Part 1 of the ESG, provide transparent information about these and include learners in all steps of development, implementation and evaluation of micro-credentials. https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/03/Micro-credentials_Framework_final-1.pdf (p. 6).

Information on the provider	Christian Leadership Institution (CLI) and Media+ The CLI is an alternative provider of higher education offering specialised training in church leadership. The micro-credential is delivered in partnership with Media+, a Christian social media charity.	In this example, we have imagined collaboration between an alternative provider of higher education (CLI) and a charity (Media+) which offers specialisation in the chosen learning outcome. Names are fictitious.
Information on the micro-credential	Title: **Facilitating Online Relational Communities** Country: Austria Language: Austrian Date of issuance: 12/03/2023 QR code to verify authenticity of certificate	The example contains the title of the micro-credential, the date in which the student has completed it. A dummy QR code has been used to demonstrate the authenticity of the certificate. The code could be linked, for example, to a third-party certificate verification service or to a URL on the site of the provider listing recipients of the certificate. There are different ways to verify the authenticity of certificates, and providers are free to suggest what works best in their context.
Information on the learning experience	Learning outcomes: 1. The recipient can apply knowledge and understanding about social media and interpersonal relationships in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work as facilitator in generating faith-based communities. 2. The recipient has also demonstrated competence in solving problems in the study of online communities. 3. The recipient has demonstrated ability to evaluate his/her character in relation to the virtue of patience. Workload: 2 ECTS (50 hours of learning) Assessment: A report on a pilot project in facilitating online community and a final written exam.	This example illustrates how the MC learning outcomes must reflect the QF-EHEA framework in order to be considered a higher education qualification. N. 1 and 2 in the example reflect the following First Cycle learning outcome: '*The recipient can apply knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study*' (see Appendix D for a list of QF-EHEA outcomes to choose from). The MC may include other learning outcomes which are not specified in the QF-EHEA. Learning outcome N.3 on the character virtue of patience is an example of this. The workload has been imagined as of 2 ECTS – which is about 50 hours of learning. There is a clear indication of the assessment scheme. Notice that there is a combination of assessment methods and a final assessment.
Information on the level	QF-EHEA: First Cycle EQF: level 6 ISCED: level 6, subject code: 0221 and 021 NQF level in Austria: NQR VI (note: this micro-credential does not mark the completion of the indicated levels)	The QF-EHEA should be the starting point in determining the learning outcomes (see above). The equivalence of the QF-EHEA level needs to be determined in other frameworks, such as the national framework, the EQF framework and ISCED framework. The ECTE Certification Framework can be a helpful tool in identifying these equivalencies. In addition to ISCED/UNESCO levels, ISCED subject codes are also a useful tool to enhance the transparency and international readability of the qualification. Theses can be found here. In this case, the subject codes for this micro-credential have been identified in both theology and audio-visual techniques and media.

		Where possible, include the national qualification framework (NQF) of the country where the micro-credential is delivered, in this case the NQR of Austria.
		QF-EHEA descriptors, EQF descriptors and NQF descriptors describe qualifications that mark the *completion* of each cycle/level, to avoid confusion, micro-credentials must be clearly distinguished from other types of qualifications included within the same level. This is done through the note 'this micro-credential does not mark the completion of the indicated levels'.
Form of participation in the learning activity and delivery mode	The recipient has participated in 20 hours of online learning and coaching and has spent 30 hours in project development, in data collection and analysis and in writing of a final report. Delivery mode: online, situated	In this example, the 50 hours of learning have been broken down in 20 hours of acquisition of necessary knowledge and understanding (combination of video lectures and reading), 10 hours in the pilot project development, 10 hours in data collection and analysis and 10 hours in write up of pilot project report. To meet outcome N.3 (see above), the hours of learning include teaching on the virtue of patience in interpersonal relationships and the final project report contains a self-evaluative section on the virtue of patience. The delivery mode for this MC blends online learning and assessment with situated learning.
Source	15 hours of online learning in this MC are drawn from the existing CLI module 'Contemporary Leadership'. This is a core module of the CLI *Higher Diploma in Leadership* qualification (First Cycle).	In this example, the source of this micro-credential combines new and existing materials.
Access requirements	Either: Completion of secondary education or equivalence for access to First Cycle in Austria. Or: None	The access requirements in this example offer two options, depending on the use that the student would like to make of the qualification. If this micro-credential is accessed through completion of secondary education/First Cycle access in Austria, this allows potential stacking/recognition for a First Cycle qualification. This micro-credential can also be accessed without any qualification. In this case, the wording 'no access qualification' should be indicated on the micro-credential certification. The micro-credential retains its full value, but it would normally not qualify for stacking/recognition into other formal HE qualifications (for which the student does not fulfil the admission requirement).
Integration/stackability options	For possessors with appropriate access qualifications, this micro-credential is recognised and can be counted as prior learning towards the CLI *Higher Diploma in Leadership* qualification (first cycle - 180 ECTS)	Including Integration/stackability options is optional and may include standalone, independent micro-credential/integrated, stackable towards another credential. In this example, the micro-credential is imagined as integrated within a complete Level 6 qualification.
Type of quality assurance	Quality assurance: this micro-credential is delivered by the Christian Leadership Institution (CLI) that has obtained MC Provider Accreditation for the delivery of micro-credentials through the ECTE (view CLI listing in the ECTE MC review directory and in the DEQAR). The micro-credential is integrated in the IQA policies of the provider.	Quality assurance is for an alternative provider that has obtained ECTE MC Provider Accreditation and thus demonstrated ESG1 compliance. A link is provided to the listing of the provider in the ECTE review directory, where the review reports and accreditation decision are published. A link is also provided to the EQAR listing as an accredited provider on the DEQAR. A statement is included to guarantee that the MC is integrated into the IQA (internal quality assurance) policies of the provider.

Building on the example above, here is what the micro-credential itself might look like. This would normally be a PDF file that is produced by the provider and made available to the student.

Micro-credential in Facilitating Online Relational Communities	
Information on the learner	Nikos Georgiou
	Learner identified ID Austria – ID 88764FFx
Information on the provider	Christian Leadership Institution (CLI) and Media+ (Vienna, Austria)
	The CLI is an alternative provider of higher education offering specialised training in church leadership. The micro-credential is delivered with the collaboration of Media+, a Christian social media charity.
Information on the micro-credential	Title: *Facilitating Online Relational Communities*
	Country: Austria
	Language: Austrian
	Date: 12/03/2023
	QR code to verify authenticity
Information on the learning experience	Learning outcomes: The recipient: can apply knowledge and understanding about social media and interpersonal relationships in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work as facilitator in generating faith-based communities; has demonstrated competence in solving problems in the study of online communities; has demonstrated ability to evaluate his/her character in relation to the virtue of patience.
	Workload: 2 ECTS (50 hrs of learning)
	Assessment: A pilot project report in facilitating online community and a final written exam.
Information on the level (note: this micro-credential does not mark the completion of the indicated levels)	QF-EHEA: First Cycle
	EQF: level 6
	ISCED: level 6, subject code: 0221 and 0211
	NQF level in Austria: NQR VI
Form of participation in the learning activity	The recipient has participated in 20 hours of online learning and coaching and 30 hours in project development, data collection and analysis and writing of a final report.
	Delivery mode: online, situated
Source	CLI module 'Contemporary Leadership' + original materials
Access requirements	Completion of secondary education or equivalent for access to First Cycle in Austria.
Integration/Stackability options	For possessors with appropriate access qualifications, this micro-credential is recognised and can be counted as prior learning towards the CLI *Higher Diploma in Leadership* qualification (first cycle - 180 ECTS).
Quality assurance	This micro-credential is delivered by the Christian Leadership Institution (CLI) that has obtained MC Provider Accreditation for the delivery of micro-credentials through the ECTE and is compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines part 1 (view CLI listing in the ECTE MC review directory and in the DEQAR). The micro-credential is integrated in the IQA policies of the provider.

Appendix B – MCP-SER Template

Please use the following template to produce a Micro-Credential Provider Self-Evaluation Report (MCP-SER). The main body of the narrative should follow the outline below. Although bullet points are appropriate in some sections, a narrative style is generally most suitable. The entire MCP-SER should not be longer than 20 pages (plus external resources).

A. Executive summary[53]
- Indicate the name of the provider, the date of submission of the MCP-SER and the classification of the report as 'initial MCP review'.
- Summarise areas of strength and weakness in relation the *Standards for MCP Accreditation* (these should reflect section E. Conclusions).

B. Introduction to the MCP-SER and the accreditation process[54]
- Give the background and reason for the report.
- Reference documents that have informed the MCP-SER such as the *Standards for MCP Accreditation* and any additional research (local or regional) into micro-credentials (optional but recommended).
- Describe the process and the people involved in producing the MC-SER and the overall responsibilities in the MCP accreditation process.
- Define the terms of reference of the review, including a description of the main stages and timescale of the MCP accreditation process.
- Indicate the primary language of the institution and of the intended micro-credentials (if applicable, list supporting documents that have been translated).

C. Introduction to the provider and micro-credentials[55]
- General Description of the provider: Indicate the legal status of the provider in your country, accreditation status, a brief history and the mission/vision statement and where delivery of micro-credentials fits in.
- Facilities: Brief description of facilities (local or remote) that will support the delivery of micro-credentials. If online delivery is included, include a brief description of the online platform and IT provision.
- Partnerships: indicate potential partnerships in the design and delivery of micro-credentials.

D. Evaluation of compliance with the *Standards for MCP Accreditation*[56]
- This section should follow the outline the *Standards and Guidelines for Micro-credential Providers*:
  - MCP 1 – *Design and approval of micro-credentials*
  - MCP 2 – *Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment*
  - MCP 3 – *Student admission, progression, recognition and certification*
  - MCP 4 – *Educational staff*
  - MCP 5 – *Learning resources and student support*
  - MCP 6 – *Public information*
  - MCP 7 – *Policies for quality assurance*
- Provide a detailed response to each statement of each of the seven standards. For example, in responding to standard *MPC 1 – Design and approval or micro-credentials*, describe the processes micro-credential design (e.g. measurable comparable, understandable, etc), indicate how learning outcomes of micro-credentials will map onto the QF-EHEA, how micro-credentials are designed to be relevant, etc.
- Given that MCP Accreditation does not necessarily require that micro-credentials are already being delivered, the evidence in the SER can take the form of envisioned examples. These will allow the reviewers to ensure that the provider has understood the implementation of the standards.
- List evidence. Where appropriate, provide evidence of compliance (e.g. mission statements, policy documents, staff lists, organisational charts, regulations, etc). These may take the form of supporting documentation and should be hyperlinked and numbered in accordance with the Supporting Documentation Index in section F of the report (see below).[57]

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[53] This section should normally not be more than 1 page.
[54] This section should normally not be more than 2-3 pages.
[55] This section should normally not be more than 4-5 pages.
[56] This is the main section of the MCP-SER and should normally be about 7-10 pages.
[57] Supporting documentation does not count toward the 20-page limit.

- If micro-credentials are being delivered in modes that have not been previously subjected to external quality assurance reviews (e.g.by online or distance education) the MCP-SER may need to respond to additional standards.

E. Micro-credential template and example

- Provide a template for micro-credential design and certification that follows the standard format as illustrated in Appendix A
- Provide the example of one fully designed micro-credential[58]

F. Conclusions[59]

- Provide a brief self-assessment overview of compliance with the *Standards for Micro-credential Providers*;
- Include additional reflections and plans for development.

G. Supporting Documentation Index

- Provide a numbered index of supporting documentation (e.g. examples of evidence) that matches the sections of the report; include direct links to access all individual documents.[60] Please do not submit digital attachments nor links to folders containing multiple documents.

Your MCP-SER must be submitted digitally in English.

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[58] It is understood that these micro-credentials may not yet be delivered, but an example of a full design will allow the review to verify the compliance to the standard micro-credential format.
[59] This section should normally not be more than 1-2 pages.
[60] This might entail using your own cloud storage and sharing facilities (e.g. Dropbox).

Appendix C – Simplified MCP-SER Template

Please use the following template to produce a Simplified Micro-Credential Provider Self-Evaluation Report (S-MCP-SER). This only applies to providers holding a valid external review demonstrating compliance to the ESG (Part 1). The main body of the narrative should follow the outline below. Although bullet points are appropriate in some sections, a narrative style is generally most suitable. The entire S-MCP-SER should not be longer than 20 pages (plus external resources).

A. Executive summary[61]
   - Indicate the name of the provider, the date of submission of the S-MCP-SER and the classification of the report as 'simplified MPC review'.
   - Summarise areas of strength and weakness in relation the application of ESG 1 standards to micro-credentials (these should reflect section E. Conclusions).

B. Introduction to the S-MCP-SER and the accreditation process[62]
   - Give the background and reason for the report.
   - Reference documents that have informed the S-MCP-SER such as the *Standards for MCP Accreditation* and the review reports from your latest external review. Also mention any additional research (local or regional) into micro-credentials (optional but recommended).
   - Describe the process and the people involved in producing the S-MC-SER and the overall responsibilities in the MCP accreditation process.
   - Define the terms of reference of the review, including a description of the main stages and timescale of the MCP accreditation process.
   - Indicate the primary language of the institution and of the intended micro-credentials (if applicable, list supporting documents that have been translated).

C. Introduction to the provider and micro-credentials[63]
   - General Description of the provider: Indicate the legal status of the provider in your country, accreditation status, a brief history and the mission/vision statement and where delivery of micro-credentials fits in.
   - Facilities: Brief description of facilities (local or remote) that will support the delivery of micro-credentials. If online delivery is included, include a brief description of the online platform and IT provision.
   - Partnerships: indicate potential partnerships in the design and delivery of micro-credentials.

D. Evidence of application of ESG 1 standards to micro-credentials [64]
   - The evidence provided needs to cover all of the ESG 1 standards[65] and put them in relation to micro-credentials:
      1.1. Policies for quality assurance
      1.2. Design and approval of programmes
      1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
      1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
      1.5. Teaching staff
      1.6. Learning resources and student support
      1.7. Information management
      1.8. Public information
      1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
      1.10. Cyclical external quality assurance
   - If micro-credentials are being delivered in modes that have not been previously subjected to external quality assurance reviews (e.g.by online or distance education) the S-MCP-SER may need to respond to additional standards.

E. Micro-credential template and example
   - Provide a template for micro-credential design and certification that follows the standard format as illustrated in Appendix A

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[61] This section should normally not be more than 1 page.
[62] This section should normally not be more than 2-3 pages.
[63] This section should normally not be more than 4-5 pages.
[64] This is the main section of the MCP-SER and should normally be about 7-10 pages.
[65] See https://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/ESG/00/2/ESG_2015_616002.pdf

- Provide the example of one fully designed micro-credential[66]

F. Conclusions[67]

- Provide a brief self-assessment overview of how ESG 1 standards are being applied to micro-credentials;
- Include additional reflections and plans for development.

G. Supporting Documentation Index

- Provide a numbered index of supporting documentation (e.g. examples of evidence) that matches the sections of the report; include direct links to access all individual documents.[68] Please do not submit digital attachments nor links to folders containing multiple documents.

Your S-MCP-SER must be submitted digitally in English.

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[66] It is understood that these micro-credentials may not yet be delivered, but an example of a full design will allow the review to verify the compliance to the standard micro-credential format.
[67] This section should normally not be more than 1-2 pages.
[68] This might entail using your own cloud storage and sharing facilities (e.g. Dropbox).

Appendix D - QF-EHEA descriptors

The following table summarises the learning outcomes for each of the QF-EHEA Cycles. Micro-credentials typically certify one or two outcomes within a given level. The QF-EHEA outcomes are generic and are meant to be applicable for every field of higher education, allowing space for specification and application within the field of theology.

Category	QF-EHEA Short Cycle	QF-EHEA First Cycle	QF-EHEA Second Cycle
Knowledge and understanding	Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle	Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study	Is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context
Ability to apply knowledge and understanding	Can apply knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts	Can apply knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study	Can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study
Ability to formulate judgments and solve problems	Have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems	Have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues	Have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements
Ability to communicate	Can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients	Can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences	Can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously
Autonomy in learning skills	Have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy	Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy	Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous

Appendix E – Stackability and RPL

This appendix provides additional information and key quotations related to stacking micro-credentials and recognition of prior learning policies (RPL). It should be remembered that micro-credentials are small, self-contained pieces of learning that have intrinsic value and whose main aim is not stackability.

KEY QUOTATIONS

- 'Stackability' means the possibility to combine different micro-credentials and build them logically upon each other… Different micro-credentials can be combined into a degree or other type of certification. Programme developers should consider the stackability of a micro-credential and how they might fit in the wider offer of the HEI, when designing the content and structure of a micro- credential programme.'[69]
- 'MC can, where appropriate, complement existing qualifications, providing added value while not undermining the core principle of full degree programmes in initial education and training.' [70]
- 'Decisions to 'stack' or combine credentials lie with the receiving organization (e.g. education and training institutions, employers, etc.), in line with their practices, and should support the goals and needs of the learner. Stacking does not create an automatic entitlement to a qualification or a degree.' [71]

SOME CONCERNS

- There is a concern regarding to what extent a degree is more than the sum of its parts. There is a fear that stackability may be harmful to traditional degree and that stackability should not lead to acquiring a full degree simply by stacking acquired micro-credentials. Clear rules in terms of the maximum number of ECTS that can be stacked towards a degree might be envisioned.
- There are less problems stacking within a provider than across providers. It is, in fact, much easier for providers to design micro-credentials that are part of their overall educational provision than it is to consider micro-credentials from other providers that are designed within different arrangements.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING AND MCs

Stacking micro-credentials obtained through non-formal or informal learning with existing study programmes or lifelong learning courses requires a well-established recognition of prior learning (RPL)/validation procedure.

The Council of the European Union Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning may be applied to micro-credentials: "Validation means a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases: 1. IDENTIFICATION through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual; 2. DOCUMENTATION to make visible the individual's experiences; 3. a formal ASSESSMENT of these experiences; and 4. CERTIFICATION of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification".[72]

Further information on formal, non-formal and informal learning and recognition of prior learning can be found in the guidelines that ECTE has published on this topic.[73]

Given the relative novelty of micro-credentials in the EHEA, and that stacking procedures are in the initial stages for many providers, this information may be subject to ongoing development.

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[69] https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/03/Micro-credentials_Framework_final-1.pdf.
[70] https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (p.29).
[71] https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (p.32)
[72] https://www.ehea.info/Upload/IMINQA_MC_report_Approaches_to_Quality_Assurance_of_Micro_credentials.pdf (p.22)
[73] https://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Guidelines-for-Recognition-of-Formal-non-Formal-and-Informal-Learning.pdf

Appendix F – Good practice in establishing MC IQA

ECTE's role is to support micro-credential providers in developing policies and processes for internal quality assurance (IQA) as the mechanisms whereby providers ensure the ongoing quality of their micro-credentialling activity. In addition to ECTE general guidelines on IQA policies[74] this appendix provides specific suggestions for micro-credential providers.

CONTENT

The IQA policies needs to describe how ESG 1 standards will be implemented, monitored and improved. The easiest way to do this is to develop policies and processes that address each of the MCP standards found in section 2 of this document (as they reflect ESG 1). So, for example:

- There should be a policy to ensure the ongoing quality of the design and approval of micro-credentials (MCP2/ESG 1.2). This policy would, for example, include ways to monitor that all micro-credentials remain relevant and that they match the profile of learners.
- There should be a policy to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are, and remain, student-centred (MCP3/ESG 1.3). This policy would, for example, include ways to monitor whether pedagogical methods used in the delivery of micro-credentials are enabling the learning process of the chosen student population. The policy would also monitor whether assessment is consistent and how student feedback, complaints and appeals are being addressed.

An idea for good practice is to have an 'IQA policy of policies' that keeps all the IQA policies for micro-credentials in order and keeps a timeline/methodology of implementation for each.

APPROACH

While ensuring the ongoing quality of micro-credentials, there is a general agreement that the internal quality assurance approach to micro-credentials needs to be light, agile and flexible, so as not to burden the academic and administrative staff and to allow for a fast response to the changing needs of learners and the labour market. [75]

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[74] See https://ecte.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Guidelines-for-Internal-Quality-Assurance-Policies.pdf
[75] https://www.ehea.info/Upload/IMINQA_MC_report_Approaches_to_Quality_Assurance_of_Micro_credentials.pdf

Appendix G – References

The standards in this document refer, in the first place, to the *10 Principles for the Design and Issuance of Micro-credentials* (EU-MC)(May 2022 EU Council Recommendation, pp.30-34).These principles include the conduction of external quality assurance of micro-credentials in line with:

1) QA Principles for EQF (EQF-QA) in the Annex IV of the European Qualifications Framework Recommendation)
2) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
3) The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET) in the field of vocational education and training.
4) Other quality assurance instruments, including registries and labels, to build public trust in micro-credentials, where applicable.

Other key references include[76]

Cedefop, 2022, Micro-credentials for labour market education and training: first look at mapping micro-credentials in European labour-market-related education, training and learning: take-up, characteristics and functions. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper, No 87. http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/351271 (accessed 18/01/2023).

Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability, 2022, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf (accessed 18/01/2023).

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France Competences, The French qualifications framework to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for European Higher Education Area, https://www.francecompetences.fr/app/uploads/2021/05/20210528_FC_Rapport_EU_certification_UK_final_WEB_dp-1.pdf (accessed 21/04/2023).

German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), 2023, Microcredentials in German Universities Development picks up speed. https://translate.google.com/?sl=de&tl=en&text=MICROCREDENTIALS%20AN%20DEUTSCHEN%0AHOCHSCHULEN%0AEntwicklung%20nimmt%20Fahrt%20auf&op=translate (accessed 15/05/2023).

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Jansen, D. and Schuwer R., 2015, Institutional MOOC strategies in Europe (European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, Maastricht). Status Report Based on a Mapping Survey Conducted in October-December 2014. https://eadtu.eu/documents/Publications/OEenM/Institutional_MOOC_strategies_in_Europe.pdf (accessed 01/05/2023).

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[76] References drawn from ENQA (2023) Approaches to Quality Assurance of Micro-credentials https://www.ehea.info/Upload/IMINQA_MC_report_Approaches_to_Quality_Assurance_of_Micro_credentials.pdf

Kato, S., V. Galán-Muros and T. Weko, 2020, The emergence of alternative credentials. *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 216, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/b741f39e-en (accessed 02/05/2023).

Kazin, C. J. and Clerkin, K. M., 2018, The potentials and limitations of microcredentials, s.l.: Service Members opportunity Colleges. http://supportsystem.livehelpnow.net/resources/23351/Potential%20and%20Limitations%20of%20Microcredentials%20FINAL_SEPT%202018.pdf (accessed 18/01/2023).

MICROBOL, 2020, Desk research report. https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2020/09/MICROBOL-Desk-Research-Report.pdf (accessed 15/02/2023).

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Appendix H – Protocol for MCP online review visit

The following is the protocol for MCP online reviews (adapted from the ECTE *Guidelines for Site Visits and VETs*).

1. GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE

Please keep the following general items of good practice in mind as you prepare for the MCP online review visit.

1. Online review visits examine MPC standards and guidelines for accreditation and accompanying evidence.
2. Online review visits normally rely heavily on video conferencing, but they can also take advantage of other tools to consider evidence (e.g. videos, photographs, virtual tours, etc).
3. The video conferencing platform must be easily accessible to all participants, easy to use and verified for security and privacy. Links for meetings must be sent well in advance to all participants.
4. Institutions ensure appropriate bandwidth and secure connectivity for the duration of the online review visit.
5. Online review visits require a detailed preparation of the visit and its scheduling by the VET panel leader, the MCP Review Secretary and the provider.
6. Online review visits demand a careful distribution of tasks among the VET panel.
7. Online review visits require attention to timing. This normally means, for example, no more than 4 hours of meetings during a day, interspersed with breaks and VET panel rounds. Online video conferencing sessions should not last more than 1 hour.
8. Online review visits give special consideration to the pressures that the medium and the circumstances may place on staff, students and stakeholders involved.
9. During the online review visit, the VET panel should schedule informal sessions to exchange expertise and explore consensus around the outcomes of the site visit.
10. Confidentiality will be guarded, and the proceedings will not be recorded;
11. Institutions commit to providing extra documentation as the ECTE MCP Review Secretary and the VET Leader request it.
12. An online review visit may tend to focus more on compliance than on enhancement, and an effort must be made to also include the latter.

2. ROLES

An online review visit works well when clear roles are in place, both in the ECTE VET panel and in the Institution.

1. The ECTE **MCP Review Secretary** (MCP-RS) works with the VET panel, ensures they have the documentation, advises and helps throughout the visit and leads in the final drafting of the MCP Review Report. The MCP-RS is considered a member of the MCP-VET panel.
2. The VET **MCP Team Leader** (MCP-TL) is responsible (with the MCP-IRC) for the review schedule, general leadership and delegation of sub-roles leads in the first drafting of the Review Report.
3. The **MCP VET panel**, normally composed of 2 members in addition to the MCP RS, examines documentation, participates in the visit and participates in the initial drafting the Review Report.
4. The institution receiving the online visit must nominate an **MCP Institutional Review Coordinator** (MPC-IRC) who coordinates the entire schedule and visitation logistics from the institutional side. The MPC-IRC, for example, makes sure the right people are in the right meetings at the right time, sends links as necessary, participates in all meetings, coordinates technology troubleshooting from the institutional side, arranges virtual video tours and provides documentation where required.

3. PRE-VISIT DOCUMENTATION

In addition to the required MCP-SER and documentation, institutions receiving online site visits are advised to provide the following additional documentation for the VET panel least one month in advance.

- Video of facilities. A live video tour is included in the scheduling during the visit, but an additional video may provide better quality and more information before the actual visit.
- Brief video interviews of students, staff and faculty. If there are students already engaged in studying micro-credentials, they might respond to simple questions about why they have chosen to study a micro-credential, how their experience has been so far.   Staff and faculty might be asked about their experience in working with micro-credentials so far. The main purpose is to establish a relational context with the visitation team.
- Videos of collaborating partners (if any). These should again be brief and simply provide a visual and relational context of the activity (not a full report).
- If online delivery is envisioned in the delivery of micro-credentials, 2-3 video excerpts of lectures or other learning events. Links and access passwords to the VLE should be provided.

The videos should all be no more than 3 minutes each and do not necessarily need to be of high quality or edited (they should not become a major production burden for the institution).

Videos should be uploaded by the institution to a cloud server and the links sent to the MPC VET Team Leader (MPC-TL) and to the MCP Review Secretary (MCP-RS).

SUGGESTED SCHEDULING

Online site visits require particular care in scheduling. In brief, everyone needs to know what link to click on at what time and for what purpose. A detailed schedule is agreed on at least two weeks before the visit by the MCP-TL and the MCP-IRC. The MCP-RS will stand by for help and advice as necessary.

The following sample schedule is proposed as a template. Each visitation may require adjusting and personalisation, but the basic components should stay in place.

	Time/length	Purpose	Who is involved	Link	Notes
Day 1	9.30 (30m)	Introductory meeting	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC and everyone involved with the delivery of micro-credentials,	Institutional Zoom room	Everyone connects. The MCP-VET panel introduce themselves and introduce the review visit. The provider introduces those involved in MCs and their roles.
	10.00 (1,30 h)	Review evidence for MCP 1 – policies for quality assurance and MCP 10 – cyclical review	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC, institutional leadership, external stakeholders as appropriate	Institutional Zoom room	MPC – TL leads. This is a crucial meeting to ensure that appropriate IQA policies are in place and consistently applied to all MCs
	Break				
	12.00 (1h)	Review evidence for MCP 2 – design and approval of MCs and for MCP 9 – ongoing	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC, MC Dean of Studies (or equivalent)	Institutional Zoom room	TL leads.

	monitoring and periodic review			
Break				
	15.00 (1h)	Review evidence for MCP 3 – student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC, MC Dean of Studies and educational staff involved in delivery.	Institutional Zoom room	TL leads.
	16.30 (1 h)	Review evidence for MCP 4 – Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC, MC Dean of Studies administration staff involved in MCs	Institutional Zoom room	TL leads.- Special attention is given in this meeting to examine the Certification of MCs according to the standard format
Day 2	9.00	Debrief	VET	ECTE Zoom	Informal debriefing from day before
	10.00 (1 h)	Review evidence for MCP 5 – Educational staff	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC, educational staff involved in delivery (including partnering organisations)	Institutional Zoom room	TL leads.
	11.30 (30 min)	Review evidence for MCP 6 – learning resources and student support	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC, librarian/resource centre leader, administration staff involved in MCs	Institutional Zoom room	TL leads.
	12.30 (30 min)	Review evidence for MCP 7 - Information management and MCP 8 – public information	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC, IT staff, Dean of MCs	Institutional Zoom room	TL leads.
Break				
	14.00 (1h)	Report preparation	VET	/	VETs work individually on the worksheets to compile report
	15.00 (1.5h)	Report drafting	VET, RS	ECTE Zoom	TL leads, RS participates

17.00 (30m)	Final meeting	VET, institutional leaders, RS, IRC	Institutional Zoom room	TL leads

Day 3	If necessary, an additional day may be required to examine the following (in this case these meetings would take place on day 2 and the report writing and final meeting on day 3)			
	Online delivery facilities	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC, IT staff, Dean of MCs		If extensive use of online delivery in sin place the ECTE Guidelines for Distance and Online Delivery should be referred to
	Partnering organisations	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC, partners		If MC delivery involves partnering organisations, these should be interviewed
	Meet students	MCP-VET, MCP-IRC, MC students		If MC are already on offer, students should be interviewed

A first draft of these Guidelines was approved by the ECTE Board on March 2023. This is the November 2023 revision.

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